

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus comprising:

a chamber having an inlet for receiving a pressurized fluid jet, a port for receiving a flow of abrasive particles which are entrained into said fluid jet, and an exit through which said fluid jet and entrained abrasives exit said chamber,

a mixing tube having an entry port for receiving said fluid jet and entrained abrasives, an inner wall for directing the flow of said fluid jet and entrained abrasives, and an outlet port through which said fluid jet and entrained abrasives exit said tube, wherein said tube entry port is proximate said chamber exit,

a lubricating fluid reservoir that surrounds at least a portion of the outer wall of said mixing tube,

wherein at least a portion of said mixing tube wall being porous, and

wherein said lubricating fluid passes from said lubricating reservoir and through said porous wall to lubricate at least a portion of the surface of said mixing tube wall so as to resist erosion of said tube wall while the fluid jet and entrained abrasives flow through said mixing tube.

2. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the smallest cross sectional dimension of the passage connecting said mixing tube inlet and outlet ports is in the range of 50-3,000 microns.

3. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said abrasive particles have an average diameter of less than half of the smallest cross sectional dimension of the passage connecting said mixing tube inlet and outlet ports.

4. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said lubricating fluid having a kinematic viscosity whose ratio with the kinematic viscosity of said jet's carrier fluid is in the range of 100/1 – 40,000/1.

5. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said lubricating fluid has a flow rate whose ratio with the flow rate of the fluid jet and entrained abrasives is in the range of 1/10,000 – 1/20.

6. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the thickness of said mixing tube wall is varied along its length to control the flow rate of the lubricating fluid.

7. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said mixing tube wall has variable porosity along its length to control the flow rate of the lubricating fluid.

8. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said porous mixing tube being fabricated from a porous ceramic material.

9. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 8, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting its inlet and outlet ports is made by a process selected from the group consisting of casting, molding and machining processes for said porous ceramic material.

10. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said porous mixing tube being fabricated from a porous metal.

11. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 10, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting its inlet and outlet ports is made by a process selected from the group consisting of casting, molding and machining processes for said porous metal.

12. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said porous mixing tube being fabricated from a gravity sintered, porous material.

13. An abrasive, fluid jet cutting apparatus as recited in claim 12, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting its inlet and outlet ports is made by using electric discharge machining to machine said porous material.

14. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of a cutting jet, mixing tube due to a fluid jet with entrained abrasive particles flowing from said tube's inlet port, along said tube's wall and exiting through said tube's outlet port, said method comprises the steps of:

forming said mixing tube so that at least a portion of its wall is porous,

surrounding at least a portion of the outer wall of said mixing tube wall with a lubricating fluid reservoir, and

1 forcing lubricating fluid to pass from said lubricating reservoir and through
2 said porous wall to form a lubricating film between said mixing tube wall and said
3 flow of abrasive fluid.

4 15. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
5 claim 14, wherein the smallest cross sectional dimension of the passage connecting
6 said mixing tube inlet and outlet ports is in the range of 50-3,000 microns.

7 16. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
8 claim 14, wherein said abrasive particles have an average diameter of less than half of
9 the smallest cross sectional dimension of the passage connecting said mixing tube
10 inlet and outlet ports.

11 17. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
12 claim 14, wherein said lubricating fluid having a kinematic viscosity whose ratio with
13 the kinematic viscosity of said jet's carrier fluid is in the range of 100/1 – 40,000/1.

14 18. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
15 claim 14, wherein said lubricating fluid has a flow rate whose ratio with the flow rate
16 of the fluid jet and entrained abrasives is in the range of 1/10,000 – 1/20.

17 19. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
18 claim 14, wherein the thickness of said mixing tube wall is varied along its length to
19 control the flow rate of the lubricating fluid.

20 20. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
21 claim 14, wherein said mixing tube wall has variable porosity along its length to
22 control the flow rate of said lubricating fluid.

23 21. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
24 claim 14, wherein said porous mixing tube being fabricated from a porous ceramic
25 material.

26 22. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
27 claim 21, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting its inlet and outlet ports is
28 made by a process selected from the group consisting of casting, molding and
29 machining processes for said porous ceramic material.

30 23. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
31 claim 14, wherein said porous mixing tube being fabricated from a porous metal.

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1 24. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
2 claim 23, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting its inlet and outlet ports is
3 made by a process selected from the group consisting of casting, molding and
4 machining processes for said porous metal.

5 25. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
6 claim 14, wherein said porous mixing tube being fabricated from a gravity sintered,
7 porous material.

8 *SWN* 26. A method for reducing erosion on the inner wall of said mixing tube as recited in
9 claim 25, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting its inlet and outlet ports is
10 made by using electric discharge machining to machine said porous material.

11 27. A mixing tube apparatus for use with an abrasive, fluid jet cutting system, said
12 system comprising a chamber having an inlet for receiving a pressurized fluid jet, a
13 port for receiving a flow of abrasive particles which are entrained into said fluid jet,
14 and an exit through which said fluid jet and entrained abrasives exit said chamber,
15 wherein said mixing tube apparatus comprising:

16 a mixing tube having an entry port for receiving said fluid jet and entrained
17 abrasives, an inner wall for directing the flow of said fluid jet and entrained abrasives,
18 and an outlet port through which said fluid jet and entrained abrasives exit said tube,
19 wherein said tube entry port is fixed proximate said chamber exit,

20 a lubricating fluid reservoir that surrounds at least a portion of the outer wall
21 of said mixing tube,

22 wherein at least a portion of said mixing tube wall being porous, and

23 wherein said lubricating fluid passes from said lubricating reservoir and
24 through said porous wall to lubricate at least a portion of the surface of said mixing
25 tube wall so as to resist erosion of said tube wall while the fluid jet and entrained
26 abrasives flow through said mixing tube.

27 28. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein the smallest cross
28 sectional dimension of the passage connecting said mixing tube inlet and outlet ports
29 is in the range of 50-3,000 microns.

10010667-120601

1 29. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein said abrasive particles
2 have an average diameter of less than half of the smallest cross sectional dimension of
3 the passage connecting said mixing tube inlet and outlet ports.

4 30. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein said lubricating fluid
5 having a kinematic viscosity whose ratio with the kinematic viscosity of said jet's
6 carrier fluid is in the range of 100/1 – 40,000/1.

7 31. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein said lubricating fluid has
8 a flow rate whose ratio with the flow rate of the fluid jet and entrained abrasives is in
9 the range of 1/10,000 – 1/20.

10 32. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein the thickness of said
11 mixing tube wall is varied along its length to control the flow rate of the lubricating
12 fluid.

13 33. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein said mixing tube wall has
14 variable porosity along its length to control the flow rate of the lubricating fluid.

15 34. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein said porous mixing tube
16 being fabricated from a porous ceramic material.

17 35. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 34, wherein the mixing tube passage
18 connecting its inlet and outlet ports is made by a process selected from the group
19 consisting of casting, molding and machining processes for said porous ceramic
20 material.

21 36. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein said porous mixing tube
22 being fabricated from a porous metal.

23 37. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 36, wherein the mixing tube passage
24 connecting its inlet and outlet ports is made by a process selected from the group
25 consisting of casting, molding and machining processes for said porous metal.

26 38. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 27, wherein said porous mixing tube
27 being fabricated from a gravity sintered, porous material.

28 39. A mixing tube apparatus as recited in claim 38, wherein the mixing tube passage
29 connecting its inlet and outlet ports is made by using electric discharge machining to
30 machine said porous material.

10010663-120601

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1 40. A mixing tube for use with an abrasive, fluid jet cutting system, said system
2 comprising a chamber having an inlet for receiving a pressurized fluid jet, a port for
3 receiving a flow of abrasive particles which are entrained into said fluid jet, and an
4 exit through which said fluid jet and entrained abrasives exit said chamber, wherein
5 said mixing tube having:

6 an entry port for receiving said fluid jet and entrained abrasives, an inner wall
7 for directing the flow of said fluid jet and entrained abrasives, and an outlet port
8 through which said fluid jet and entrained abrasives exit said tube, wherein said tube
9 entry port is fixed proximate said chamber exit,

10 wherein at least a portion of said mixing tube wall being porous,

11 wherein at least a portion of said mixing tube when in use being surrounded
12 by a lubricating fluid reservoir, and

13 wherein said lubricating fluid passes from said lubricating reservoir and
14 through said porous wall to lubricate at least a portion of the surface of said mixing
15 tube wall so as to resist erosion of said tube wall while the fluid jet and entrained
16 abrasives flow through said mixing tube.

17 41. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein the smallest cross sectional
18 dimension of the passage connecting said mixing tube inlet and outlet ports is in the
19 range of 50-3,000 microns.

20 42. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein said abrasive particles have an
21 average diameter of less than half of the smallest cross sectional dimension of the
22 passage connecting said mixing tube inlet and outlet ports.

23 43. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein said lubricating fluid having a
24 kinematic viscosity whose ratio with the kinematic viscosity of said jet's carrier fluid
25 is in the range of 100/1 – 40,000/1.

26 44. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein said lubricating fluid has a flow rate
27 whose ratio with the flow rate of the fluid jet and entrained abrasives is in the range
28 of 1/10,000 – 1/20.

29 45. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein the thickness of said mixing tube
30 wall is varied along its length to control the flow rate of the lubricating fluid.

10010663-120601

1 46. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein said mixing tube wall has variable
2 porosity along its length to control the flow rate of the lubricating fluid.

3 47. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein said porous mixing tube being
4 fabricated from a porous ceramic material.

5 48. A mixing tube as recited in claim 47, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting
6 its inlet and outlet ports is made by a process selected from the group consisting of
7 casting, molding and machining processes for said porous ceramic material.

8 49. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein said porous mixing tube being
9 fabricated from a porous metal.

10 50. A mixing tube as recited in claim 49, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting
11 its inlet and outlet ports is made by a process selected from the group consisting of
12 casting, molding and machining processes for said porous metal.

13 51. A mixing tube as recited in claim 40, wherein said porous mixing tube being
14 fabricated from a gravity sintered, porous material.

15 ~~52. A mixing tube as recited in claim 51, wherein the mixing tube passage connecting~~
16 ~~its inlet and outlet ports is made by using electric discharge machining to machine~~
17 ~~said porous material.~~

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Summary